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SUBJECT: NEW BILATERAL CIVIL ASSISTANCE SPARKS SOME  
CRITICISM

REF: OTTAWA 136

1. (SBU) Summary: A new U.S. - Canada Civil Assistance Plan (CAP) is one in a series of post-9/11 bilateral defense and security measures designed to serve both countries when natural or manmade disasters occur. Lack of public information here about this bilateral military accord has begun to spark some political criticism in Canada, however. Closer bilateral coordination, synchronization, and transparency would help to neutralize potential Canadian political opposition to the CAP and other new defense and security agreements. End summary.

New Mil/Mil Plan for Civil Emergencies...

2. (SBU) U.S. NORTHCOM and Canada Command commanders General Gene Renuart and General Marc Dumais on February 15 signed a new U.S. - Canada Civil Assistance Plan (CAP). The CAP provides a planning and operational framework for the military of one country to provide support to the military of the other country in the performance of civil support operations, such as in cases of flooding, forest fires, hurricanes, earthquakes, or in the aftermath of a terrorist attack. Under the CAP, military forces from one nation would augment the other nation's military (not civilian) forces in civil support operations. The CAP does not cover support for law enforcement operations. Legal considerations related to the troops fall under the 1953 NATO Status of Force Agreement. Appropriate civilian authorities, in coordination with the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and the Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), would determine when to invoke the CAP.

3. (SBU) The CAP, the Basic Defense Document of 2006 and the May 2008 Joint Declaration on Defense Relations variously clarify and improve cross-border planning and operational preparation, to include how and when mutual aid is required to face natural and man-made disasters in either country. Efforts to complement these initiatives, such as a Combined Defense Plan (CDP) and a Combined Mission Interoperability Plan (CMIP), should further strengthen bilateral defense cooperation.

...Provokes Some Public Criticism

4. (SBU) The leftist Council of Canadians (COC) has already publicly criticized the Canadian government for failing to release information about this agreement, which could "militarize" the bilateral relationship. COC spokesman Stuart Trew has raised the specter of renegade, armed U.S. troops patrolling Canadian pipelines and roads. He noted that, in contrast, NORTHCOM's website already offered information about the CAP. He additionally voiced concerns

about who would control American forces engaging in such operations in Canada.

15. (SBU) Comment: Those few Canadians who will even notice the CAP will likely see it as a good thing for both Canada and the U.S. The allegations by COC nonetheless will no doubt further feed the fever of conspiracy theorists in Canada (and the U.S.) about a potential loss of Canadian sovereignty from NAFTA and the Security and Prosperity Partnership, among other agreements. An apparent lack of inter-governmental coordination and/or transparency about the announcement of the CAP likely heightened domestic suspicions here and may have driven up the political cost to the Canadian government. It would be worthwhile for both sides better to synchronize the public affairs aspects of such positive initiatives in order to maximize the comfort levels related to new efforts at needed cross-border cooperation.

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